

JULY 7, 1976

THE REAGAN SPEECH

ANNCR:

FORMER CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR RONALD REAGAN, WHO IS WAGING A TIGHT RACE WITH PRESIDENT FORD FOR THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION, WENT ON NATIONAL TELEVISION THIS WEEK TO PRESENT HIS CASE TO AMERICAN VOTERS. CHARLES MEDD HAS THIS REACTION.

VOICE:

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE AVERAGE REPUBLICAN, WHEN JUDGING THE PARTY CONTEST WITH HIS HEAD RATHER THAN HIS HEART, PREFERS GERALD FORD BECAUSE OF THE PRESIDENT'S EXPERIENCE IN OFFICE AND WHAT PUBLIC OPINION POLLS SAY IS HIS ELECTABILITY. BUT THIS SAME REPUBLICAN, WHEN RELYING ON HIS EMOTIONS, IS SAID TO PREFER RONALD REAGAN, THE ARTICULATE SPOKESMAN FOR CONSERVATIVE IDEALS THAT ARE SO APPEALING TO THE PARTY FAITHFUL. THIS WEEK, IN A SELF-FINANCED, HALF-HOUR SPEECH ON TELEVISION, MISTER REAGAN REACHED OUT FOR BOTH THE HEADS AND HEARTS OF REPUBLICAN VOTERS, ARGUING THAT HE CAN SATISFY PARTY YEARNINGS AND WIN THE ELECTION AS WELL.

THE REAGAN SPEECH, COMING IN THE WAKE OF THE LONG BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS, WAS NOT LACKING IN THOSE PATRIOTIC THEMES THAT AMERICANS HAVE HEARD IN RECENT MONTHS, NOR DID IT LACK POLITICAL CONTENT. WITHOUT MENTIONING BY NAME EITHER OF HIS RIVALS -- REPUBLICAN GERALD FORD OR DEMOCRAT JIMMY CARTER -- MISTER REAGAN ATTACKED BOTH WITH ILL-DISGUISED REFERENCES: THE PRESIDENT AS A TYPICAL POLITICIAN TRYING TO SOLVE NEW PROBLEMS WITH OLD METHODS AND MISTER CARTER WHO WOULD SOLVE THEM WITH PLEASANT SMILES AND VAGUE PROMISES.

AS AN ALTERNATIVE, MISTER REAGAN -- SAYING HE'S NOT "A POLITICIAN BY PROFESSION" -- PRESENTED HIS EIGHT-YEAR

RECORD AS GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA WHERE, HE ARGUES, THE STATE GOVERNMENT PROVIDED NEEDED SERVICES WITH EFFICIENCY. IN THE REAGAN VIEW, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS BECOME TOO BIG, TOO INTRUSIVE IN THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE, AND TOO EXPENSIVE. HE DESCRIBES INFLATION AS "THEFT-BY-LEGISLATION", -- IN HIS WORDS -- "A BITTER, GOVERNMENT-CREATED FACT OF LIFE THE AMERICAN FAMILY HAS TO LIVE WITH."

RONALD REAGAN, WHO WAS ONCE A DEMOCRAT HIMSELF, KNOWS HE WOULD NEED A LOT OF DEMOCRATIC VOTES TO BECOME PRESIDENT, AND HE ADDRESSED HIS MESSAGE ACCORDINGLY. HE CALLED FOR THE CREATION OF A NEW VOTER COALITION, COMPRISED OF THE VARYING ELEMENTS OF THE VAST MIDDLE CLASS WHO, HE SAYS, "KEEP THIS COUNTRY GOING" AND WHO, HE BELIEVES, STILL RELISH THE TRADITIONAL AMERICAN VALUES.

THE SPEECH CAME JUST SIX WEEKS BEFORE THE REPUBLICANS GATHER IN KANSAS CITY TO CHOOSE THEIR CANDIDATE. IT NOW APPEARS THAT PRESIDENT FORD WILL ARRIVE AT THE CONVENTION WITH MORE DELEGATE VOTES THAN HIS CALIFORNIA RIVAL BUT NOT ENOUGH TO GUARANTEE THE NOMINATION. AND WHILE THE REAGAN MESSAGE WAS DIRECTED AT THE ENTIRE COUNTRY, IT'S THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THOSE DELEGATES WHO REMAIN UNDECIDED THAT RONALD REAGAN IS NOW AFTER.

GH/PBM